

Gender Inequality & Violence against Women

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reason is a crime for me.*

*My brother is allowed to go out on his own.
I am not.*

*Men often want to show their
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*Whenever they talk of my
future they only talk of my
marriage*

Young Minds Speak

A Study on Attitudes of School Children

SWAYAM

Ending Violence Against Women

2005

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Swayam conceptualised and conducted this study to investigate and bring into focus the issues of gender inequality and domestic violence from the perspective of adolescent children. Given that schools are a microcosm of society at large, and that adolescents, soon to be adults, will shape the world of tomorrow, we believed that such a study would throw light onto a subject that needs to be seen through the viewpoint of children.

This study is the combined effort of Amrita Issac Roy and the Swayam team consisting of Sukanya Gupta, Chandana Baksi, Anindita Mazumdar and Anuradha Kapoor.

We would like to thank Amrita Issac Roy for her help in streamlining and administering the questionnaire, conducting the focus group discussions and writing the report of the findings from the study.

We would also like to thank Aparna Sen, for her inputs on the Executive Summary.

We are grateful to the authorities of all the schools who very kindly allowed us to talk to their students, and encouraged them to cooperate in this study.

Last, but not least, we thank the students who participated in this study. We value their honest opinions and participation in candid discussions, and we are grateful to them for sharing their experiences with us.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gender Equality – enshrined in law

As early as 1945 gender equality was proclaimed a fundamental human right at the international level. Over the years, the United Nations Organization has created a formidable legacy of internationally accepted strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide (See Appendix I). While progress has been achieved, much work remains to be done.

The Indian Constitution grants equal rights to men and women, and India too has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the following international labour standards: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951. In spite of the guarantee of equality under the Constitution and the fact that India is a signatory to the various conventions mentioned above, gender inequality and gender based violence is rampant in the country. Various studies have established that gender-based violence has far-reaching consequences affecting the development, health and life-prospects of the Indian woman.

Gender Equality – the reality

The girl child in India encounters discrimination throughout her life cycle. Discrimination begins in the womb, with preference for male children leading to practices such as amniocentesis, sex selection and female foeticide. It continues after birth with female infanticide and during childhood with the girl child often being denied adequate nutrition and access

to education and health care, sexual abuse of female children in the household, child trafficking and prostitution and other traditional practices detrimental to women and children. Women experience a high incidence of domestic violence, dowry deaths, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and are also trafficked and forced into prostitution. Many women face violence due to their sexual orientation, widowhood, old age, disability and HIV infection. In social conflicts like casteism and communalism, women's bodies are seen to represent community honour. Laws, practices and governmental policies that discriminate against women on the basis of sex reinforce these inequalities. (See Appendix II).

The extent of discrimination varies across regions and has a serious impact on the life expectancy at birth. For example, the life expectancy of a girl child born in Uttar Pradesh is nearly 20 years below that of a girl child born in Kerala. Further, according to the 2001 Census Data, the sex ratio in India has been declining steadily and fell to 903 females per 1000 males.

Also, although national data shows little evidence, micro-level studies have shown that girls are entitled to lesser resources within the household. For instance, a twelve year long study in a district of Maharashtra showed that the percentage of severely malnourished girls was consistently two to three times higher than that of boys. Studies conducted in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai showed that there were a higher proportion of girls

than boys in Grade II and III of malnutrition. A study conducted in Gujarat in 1994 showed that the prevalence of anaemia in adolescent girls was 98 %.¹

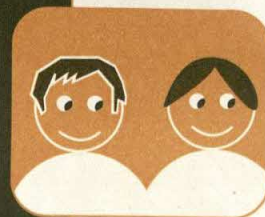
Domestic violence and children

Domestic violence is also widespread in India with one in every two women facing some form of domestic violence (INCLEN Survey 2000). Women often stay in abusive relationships because of the mistaken belief that children need a father even if he is abusive. However, various studies reveal that conflict between parents frequently affects a child's well being. Children who witness domestic violence face increased risk of emotional and behavioural problems such as anxiety, depression, poor school performance, low self-esteem, disobedience, nightmares, and physical health complaints. Pfout, Scooper and Henley in their work *Forgotten Victims of Family Violence* estimate: "Of the children who witness their mothers being abused by their father, 40% suffer anxiety, 48% suffer depression..."²

While children's reactions to violence vary according to their age, sex, and the social support that they receive, such children are more likely to act aggressively during childhood and adolescence. Children who both witness and experience abuse have the most severe behavioural problems. In fact, children who witness violence between their parents often develop many of the same behavioural and psychological problems as children who are

When I feel hungry my mother says that first my brother should eat and I should eat later.

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular school



1. UNDP, Common Country Assessment (CCA) - INDIA <http://www.undp.org.in/report/POSITION/CCA.htm>

2. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 'Fact Sheet' (Denver, USA: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

themselves abused. In Nicaragua children of battered women were twice as likely as other children to suffer from learning, emotional, and behavioural problems and almost seven times as likely to be abused themselves, physically, sexually, or emotionally.³

My mother and myself have gone through a lot of hard times with my father. He hit my mother and abused me. But today we have left him for good...

14-16 year old boy

Further, violence may undermine child survival as well. Although it is unclear exactly how domestic violence affects child survival, several explanations have been put forward. One explanation is that the children of abused mothers are more likely to be born underweight. This increases risk of dying during infancy or childhood. Another possible explanation is that mothers with violent partners may have "lower self-esteem, less mobility, weaker bargaining power, and less access to resources and thus are less able to keep their children healthy". In rural Karnataka, a study found that children of abused women received less food than other children did, suggesting that these women could not bargain with their husbands for food and other resources required by the infant.⁴

The rationale for the study

Swayam's own experience of working with children of survivors of domestic violence tells us an equally dismal story. Very often women approach us with a variety of problems related to performance and interpersonal relationships of their

children. High level of morbidity, acute anxiety, poor concentration, low sociability skills, temper tantrums, self-destructive behaviour, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse are some of the features that we frequently have to deal with in our work with child and adolescent witnesses of domestic violence. Often it is found that these children too are targets of violence in a home where there is domestic violence.

These 'forgotten victims' are all severely affected by the violence they witness at home; they lack a sense of security due to the unstable and abusive relationship their parents share and they do not find a positive role model or anchor. Often severely traumatized and invariably confused, these children take recourse to various ways of coping that are mostly unhealthy for their well-being. One eighteen year old actually attempted to take his life; another eight year old, in her desperation to save her mother from the inhuman torture of her father, devised a plan to kill him. Yet another sixteen year old boy, began to imitate his father and physically abuse his mother, because he had internalized the message that might is right and it is okay for a man to be aggressive.

Steeped in mistrust, insecurity and humiliation, these children suffer from a deep sense of inadequacy and low self-esteem. It becomes difficult for them to develop reciprocal relationships and the cycle of violence is likely to be continued by them – either as perpetrators of violence or as silent sufferers (See Appendix III).

Further, while conducting workshops on gender inequality and gender based violence with school students, we came to hear of innumerable first hand accounts of gender discrimination in the family, sexual harassment, incest, episodes of witnessing domestic violence, as students often used these workshops as a space for disclosure. They were struggling to deal with these situations and very often, the girls in particular requested us to intervene with

their parents or schools. We also realised that there was widespread acceptance of gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls amongst the students, but there was a great difference in the understanding of gender roles between boys and girls. We felt the need to systematically understand the attitudes of both girls and boys towards gender equality and violence against women and girls, with a special focus on domestic violence, as we found that there was a growing gap in the expectations they had from their relationships with one another.

Thus this study was conceived with the objective of:

- Assessing school children's attitudes to and experience of inequality between men and women.
- Assessing school children's attitudes to and experience of violence against women and girls and domestic violence in particular.
- Exploring the belief structure that encourages gender inequality and justifies gender-based violence.

Numerous studies on the link between gender inequality and gender-based violence have focused primarily on the 'principal' survivor – the adult woman. This study attempts to investigate the interface between gender inequality and domestic violence from a different perspective- that of the adolescent individual. Moreover, merely increased knowledge and understanding are not an adequate response to the severity of the problem. The ultimate goal is to stop all gender-based violence. To this end we have attempted to propose strategies to change attitudes among school children. However, while dealing with the issues of violence, we have not delved into the aspect of sexual violence, because of the disinclination of many schools to deal with this topic. Sexual violence in the domestic sphere has therefore been excluded from the purview of this study.

3. The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Center for Health and Gender Equity, CHANGE Population Reports

4. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted among schoolchildren between the ages of 12 to 19 years. The children directly interviewed were selected from English medium and Vernacular medium schools in Kolkata. A total of 3237 children were contacted across 19 schools. The schools selected were single sex as well as coeducational (See Chap 3, Table-1.2).

The study attempted to explore the following:

- Children's attitudes to and experience of inequality between men and women.
- Children's attitudes to and experience of violence against women and domestic violence in particular.
- The belief structure that encourages gender inequality and justifies gender based violence.

It was felt that by studying the above, appropriate strategies could be developed to change and/or influence change in attitudes among the school children.

In the survey, schoolchildren were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. Additionally, some group discussions were also undertaken. This summary details the major findings of the study conducted.

Belief structures

It was found that a majority of the schoolchildren believed that both girls and boys should have equal opportunities to study, choose a career and enjoy their spare time, and that they should not be treated differently. However, 25% boys and 15%



girls felt that they should be treated differently as they have different roles to play in society. Also, a higher percentage believed that girls should be given more freedom to choose what they could study, but a lower percentage believed that they should have the freedom to choose their careers, and the percentage further falls when it comes to a girl's choice of leisure time activities.

When asked about personal experiences of discrimination, only 21% of the girls admitted to facing discrimination at home in the form of restrictions in their life choices, freedom of movement, behaviour and dress code. Conversely, 15% boys admitted to getting preferential treatment at home because they were boys. However, during group discussions, we found that many children were unable to identify a number of discriminatory behaviours, as they were considered to be 'normal' or in the interest of 'protection'.

The data further revealed that almost 70% of schoolchildren felt that men were physically stronger than women and almost 50% felt that men were more aggressive than women. Perhaps physical strength and experience of aggressive or bold behaviour observed generally, led both sexes to feel that men were more aggressive than women. While a majority of students believe that women are as intelligent as men, it must be noted that a sizeable section of boys, approximately 40%, felt that men were more intelligent. This view was shared by only 10% of the women (See Table 2.8).

These findings seem to suggest that perhaps unconsciously, the physical structure of men could influence perceptions regarding their mental acumen. Consequently, to change attitudes among young people it may be necessary to downplay the physical attributes of men and highlight the different strengths that women demonstrate, such as a higher threshold of pain and greater stamina. Apart from this, it is necessary to enhance the

achievements of women through various inputs e.g. texts, visuals and school curricula. Besides, it is also possible that since more men are normally seen in pursuit of intellectual activities or are more visible in professions that require technical skills or higher education, children mistakenly surmise that this is because men are naturally more intelligent; rather than understand it as a result of the lack of opportunities and social conditioning of women.

About 27% of all school children appeared to perceive that by birth alone, women were homemakers. 54% felt that women were also more emotional and dependent than men. Not surprisingly, more boys than girls subscribed to this view.

This suggests that school children are conditioned to accept stereotypical roles of women and men, and this conditioning influences their attitudes. When read with the data on physical strength and aggressive behaviour of men above, one can conclude that these also influenced the attitudes of schoolchildren...the physically weaker, meeker and less intelligent were perhaps expected to be born homemakers and dependant as well.

Attitudes to other aspects on a broad range of beliefs tend to support the conditioning and stereotyped perceptions young people have. Over 55% believed that the man was the head in a family, 68% felt success in career was a man's greatest achievement. At the same time 75% felt motherhood was the woman's greatest

During my elder sister's wedding, six or seven of my cousin brothers were sitting together and talking. I joined them and because of that my mother scolded me.

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular school.

achievement. 72% felt a woman should go out to work, provided that the home was not neglected (Table 2.13). At the same time, 84% of students felt that in the case of a working couple, household expenses should be shared. What emerges if we correlate the data in the last two sentences is that a woman should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities and it augments the household income. Thus, she has to perform her existing task as a caregiver, even as she goes out to work. Here, more boys had ingrained beliefs; at the same time there is no doubt that girls too tended to imbibe these values early in life and perhaps carry them till adulthood.

Attitudes towards violence

Given the belief structure, outlined above, attitudes to violence are ambiguous. When asked directly whether physical violence perpetrated by men on women is ever acceptable, an overwhelming 83% said it was not. At the same time, it is evident that they seek justification for such acts and rationalise violence in general, in situations where women do not live up to their stereotypical roles of being submissive, motherly or homemakers. About 50% justify violence on grounds of female disloyalty or dishonesty. Over 30% feel it is acceptable against a sibling, if a woman is a 'nag', or does not listen to the man. 42% believe that it is fine if the woman is disrespectful. Again, more boys appear to accept these views. The trend to justify violence against wives or sisters is marked among Vernacular school going children (Table 2.18). Given that the belief structure broadly accepts that men are physically and mentally superior, such justifications are not surprising.

Only 27% of the girls said that they would hit back if physically assaulted by their husband. Over 30% of girls would 'forgive' the men in such instances. Again,

the Vernacular school going girls tend to subscribe to conventional norms much more; 40% would 'forgive' and only 20% would return a slap. In English medium schools, 23% would 'forgive' and 34% would hit back. This suggests that girls studying



There are many women even in modern cultured homes who face domestic violence. Strict action should be taken against these men. They should be thrown out of their house without any clothes and into jail.

17-19 year old girl from a single sex English medium school



in English medium schools are more resistant to accepting physical violence as a given in a gendered society. Interestingly not more than 13% of all girls would call the police in such situations, presumably out of a desire to keep violence an in-home matter. The data also suggests that going to co-educational school does not significantly change the views of girls; in fact they are more forgiving (42%) and forgetting (29%) of such behaviour. Only 12% would contemplate leaving a husband in such circumstances.

Inferring from responses furnished by boys alone, it seems that 50% would hit their wife if she physically assaulted them. They were likely to justify it if a woman was seen as lying (27%), disrespectful (32%) and neglectful of her household duties and children (34%).

It is seen from these responses that boys are twice as likely to use violence to resolve conflicts in intimate relationships than girls. On the other hand girls are more likely to tolerate and forgive violence. Thus violence as a means of resolving conflict in a man-woman relationship seems to be acceptable to the future citizens of our society.

Understanding of domestic violence

Schoolchildren were asked to identify what constitutes domestic violence. Physical violence eg. hitting, pushing, kicking etc were clearly identified by over 70%. Not taking a woman to the doctor (73%); not giving her access to money (61%), abusing and depriving her of food were also deemed as violent acts. Interestingly, preventing her from going to work was also perceived as a violent act by 59% of boys and 75% of girls. During group discussions, many students identified denying nutrition and education, restrictions on movement and lack of independence for girls as domestic violence inflicted on them by their parents. They also said that mental torture was more debilitating as it affected the psyche of the woman and had a long term impact.

Reasons for violent behaviour

School children were aware of domestic violence as described earlier. When asked the reasons for such acts, a large majority, almost 70% perceived it was due to men wanting control over women. Almost 80% felt it was due to alcohol intake by the men and over 50% felt it was due to provocation by women (Table 2.25).

Experience of domestic violence

Among children interviewed, over a third (32%) knew someone who had faced domestic violence. Girls were more aware and knowledgeable about this.

The status of domestic violence

Despite all above, there was a high reluctance to take domestic violence out of the family closet and place it as a social issue. Only 60% of all children felt it was a public issue and needed public airing. Girls were more radical than boys; almost 70% felt it was of public concern and those in Vernacular schools (66%) felt likewise.

Conclusion

The research findings reveal that school going adolescents are ambiguous on many issues. We have received mixed signals from them. On the one hand, there are encouraging signs of acceptance of equality among the sexes. On the other, a sizeable section prescribes to archaic views on the roles of women in society, and accepts violence as a legitimate means of resolving conflict under certain circumstances. In many cases, children allow for justification of violent behaviour directed at women by men. Further, while they may accept the notion of equality among the sexes in theory, when in comes to practice, they want to act out traditional roles. For instance, although almost 67% of students perceived 'not allowing a woman to work' as violence, they condoned this when 72% said that a woman should go to work only if it did not affect her household responsibilities.

We also found marked differences in the attitudes of girls and boys. In general, girls are more aware and have a better understanding of gender inequality and domestic violence as compared to boys. Girls are less likely to prescribe to gender stereotypes while boys are more likely to see women in stereotypical gender roles. However, many girls are accepting of their 'lot' in life.

No appreciable differences were found when comparing children in co-educational and same-sex schools.

A case of violence between husband and wife is private. It should not be publicized unless it is very serious. Nevertheless it cannot be accepted and must be prosecuted.

14-16 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

However there were marked differences between children from English medium schools and Vernacular schools on various counts. Children from Vernacular schools advocate less freedom and opportunity for girls, and are less open to equal treatment for girls than children from English medium schools. For instance, only 50% of children from Vernacular medium schools as compared to 95% children from English medium schools feel that a woman should have a career. Further, only 36% of children from Vernacular medium schools felt that girls should enjoy their spare time as compared to 88% children from English medium schools. Besides, girls from English medium schools are more aware of discriminatory behaviour than Vernacular medium girls. Vernacular medium students are 10 – 15% more likely than English medium students to prescribe to the stereotypical roles of 'breadwinner' and 'housewife', and 31% less agreeable to sharing of household work in cases where both husband and wife work outside the home.

Appreciable differences are also found on issues of violence between Vernacular and English medium students. Not only was advocacy of violence higher in the Vernacular boys, the Vernacular girls were also more likely to forgive their spouse for violence against them. However, girls from English medium schools were five times less likely to accept violence as compared to girls from Vernacular medium schools. Interestingly, more Vernacular students recognised varying forms of violence (apart from overt physical violence) than English medium students, and were less likely to hold women responsible for causing abuse. Further, children in English medium schools are more likely to keep silent about domestic violence as compared to children in Vernacular medium schools.

Our age analysis revealed that more school children in the younger age groups tend to prescribe to gender stereotypes. Understanding about gender stereotypes and awareness of violence against women improves significantly with age. This is possibly because they are not mature enough to understand social complexities when they are young, but are able to do so with increased social exposure as they grow older. Girls in particular, show a marked change in outlook while moving from the early teens to late teens as compared to boys.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The approach in this problem-oriented study is a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. Content and statistical analyses have been adopted. This is a short-term reconnaissance study that seeks to be descriptive, explanatory and seeks to advocate remedial steps. A research strategy best suited to the complexity of real life must combine a selection of methods. This study adopts qualitative and quantitative strategies of participant observation; semi structured interviews; sample survey and statistical data.

Techniques and tools

Techniques used for data collection includes sample survey, observation/ listening to informants through semi structured/structured group discussions and open interviews. Tools employed are questionnaires, field notes, diaries and random sampling.

The questionnaire comprised 18 structured questions and 1 open-ended sub question. Of the 18 structured questions, one question was divided into two parts, part 'a' to be answered by girls and part 'b' to be answered by boys. In total there were 20 questions.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- 1 Demographic profile (4 questions).
- 2 School children's attitudes to and experience of inequality between the sexes (8 questions).
- 3 School children's attitudes to and experience of violence against women and domestic violence in particular (8 questions).

The questions were presented in a scrambled sequence in order to prevent any chance of influencing the school children by 'leading them'.

All figures in this report are in percentages unless otherwise mentioned. All figures have been rounded off to the nearest decimal. 'Eng' and 'Ver' used in the tables are abbreviations of English and Vernacular.

Unit of analysis

This is a first level analysis where the fundamental unit investigated is the individual. Approximately 3000 school children from Class 8 to 12 corresponding to approximately 12 to 19 years olds are the focus group.

Demographic profile

■ Number of Schools and Students

A total of 19 schools and 3237 students from Kolkata, West Bengal participated in this study, which was conducted towards the end of 2002. Table 1.1 presents the target and actual number of schools and students that participated.

Table 1.1 Schools: Target and actual number that participated

	Target	Actual
Number of schools	20	19
Number of school children	3800 ⁵	3237

Parameters of School Selection

The schools were selected on the basis of certain demographic and social parameters such as:

■ **School Environment:** This refers to whether the school was single sex or co-educational in its structure. The school environment was considered in order to give representation to the views of children with different social experiences. It is undeniable that if the sample were restricted to one set the data collected would be skewed.

■ **Medium of Instruction:** This refers to whether the medium of instruction was

English or Vernacular. The choice of this parameter was based on the assumption that medium of instruction reflected its students' socio economic background. Our research revealed that the fee structure of English medium schools was higher than that of Vernacular medium schools.

Further we attempted to select schools from all parts of the city in order to prevent any chance of a single social community dominating our sample group.

The following table presents the break up of the type and number of schools that participated.

Table 1.2 Type and number of schools that participated

Type of school	Number that participated
Single Sex	
English medium boys	3
English medium girls	4
Vernacular medium boys	4
Vernacular medium girls	4
Co-Educational	
English medium	2
Vernacular medium	2

Profile of Students

A total of 3237 adolescent children participated. Of these 1514 were female (47%) and 1723 were male (53%).

The majority of the participants, 55%, were in the 14-16 years age group. The 17-19 years, were the second largest age group and comprised 28% while the 12-13 years comprised only 17% of the total participants.

5 The target number of school children being 25% of the estimated total population of school children from Class VIII to XII of 20 schools.

Of these 1627 were drawn from Vernacular schools, 1610 from English medium schools. 2566 attended single sex schools and 671 went to coeducational schools.

The following table presents the age range of the participants.

Table 1.3: Age of Participants

	Total	Total in%	Girls	Boys
12-13 years	540	17	260	280
14-16 years	1793	55	863	930
17-19 years	904	28	391	513
All age groups	3237	100	1514	1723

Source

Primary sources of study were questionnaires, observations from the group discussions and official documents of governmental and non-governmental agencies. Secondary sources include previously documented work, books, and journals.

Operative terms

Before we delve into the study it is perhaps necessary to understand the manner in which we have defined some of the operative terms used in the research.

■ **Gender**- refers to the socio-cultural definition of a man and a woman. It refers to the roles, qualities and behaviours expected from men and women by their societies. These are social constructs rooted in the belief that certain qualities, behaviour, characteristics, and roles are 'natural' for men, while others are 'natural' for women. Gender is thus not biological but a matter of culture. The masculine and feminine identities assigned to men and women respectively are constructed through the process of socialization. It is a misconception to equate sex with gender.

Sex refers to our biological form, to the differences in the anatomy of men and women, which are natural and constant. (See Appendix IV).

■ **Gender Inequality / gender discrimination**- refers to unfair or unequal treatment meted out to a woman because she is a woman, or a man because he is a man. Usually, it is women who face unequal treatment. Gender inequality is the practical manifestation of gender roles that subordinate women to men. *"Women's subordination is reflected in inequality and differences between women and men within the family and community, as well as in all social, economic, cultural and political interactions and relationships between people. It demands that women conform to certain stereotyped 'appropriate' roles and behaviour; by denying them control over their own bodies, lives and labour; by limiting their access to resources and by restricting their opportunities to participate in decisions which affect their own lives."*⁶

■ **Violence against women**- the term 'violence against women' means any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Gender based violence refers to violence directed toward a woman because she is a woman or which affects a woman disproportionately.⁷

■ **Domestic Violence**- domestic violence traditionally referred to abusive and violent behaviour between people who are married or living together or who have an ongoing or prior intimate relationship. However, over time the definition of domestic violence has been expanded to include violence against women within the family, not only in an intimate relationship. Hence

Whenever they talk of my future they only talk of my marriage.

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular school.

Hitting women without a legitimate reason is a crime for me.

14-16 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

violence against a daughter, sister, mother or any other female member of the family also falls within the definition of domestic violence. Domestic violence includes physical and sexual assaults, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, psychological humiliation, economic control and intimidation (See Appendix V).

■ **Attitude**- refers to settled behaviour as representing feeling and opinion and a settled mode of thinking informed by social values and teachings.

■ **Equality**- is the condition of having the same rights and opportunities under similar circumstances.

■ **Gender Roles**- refers to the conduct of behaviour assigned by society for men and women.

■ **Stereotype**- a preconceived, standardized, and oversimplified impression of the characteristics that typify a person, situation, etc., often shared by all members of a society or certain social groups. It refers to an attitude based on such a preconception.



6. UNDP, Gender Mainstreaming: the concept <http://www.undp.org.in/report/gstart.start-5.html>

7. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

Section 1: Children's attitudes to and experience of inequality between men and women.

Questions in this section were designed to elicit information about the target group's understanding, acceptance as well as experience of inequality between men and women in different areas.

Question 1

The first question in this series asked students whether girls and boys should have equal opportunity to study what they want, have a career of their choice and have the freedom to enjoy their leisure time.

Table 2.1 presents the data as derived from the analysis of the above question based on total number and the sex of the school children.

Table 2.1 Percentage agreeing that girls should be allowed to:

	Total	Boys	Girls
Study what they want to	86	86	86
Have a career of their choice	72	75	68
Enjoy their spare time	62	65	58

Analysis revealed that a significant majority accepted gender equality in all three choices. However the degree of acceptance varied. While 86% accepted equal opportunity for girls to study what they want, this figure declined 14 points to settle at 72% with regard to career choice. It fell another 10 points with regard to their freedom to enjoy their spare time. While equal access to education for girls was highly acceptable, equality of opportunity with regard to career choices and leisure were much less acceptable.

Table 2.2 presents the sex analysis data according to Vernacular and English medium schools.

naturally should not have equal opportunity for a career as they are not the 'breadwinners'.

Table 2.2 Percentage agreeing that boys and girls should have equal chance to:

	Ver	Eng	Boys		Girls	
			Ver	Eng	Ver	Eng
Study what they want to	78	94	80	92	76	97
Have a career of their choice	49	95	55	93	43	97
Enjoy their spare time	36	88	41	87	30	89

Analyzed by sex of students, the above table shows that there is a significant difference between the perception of girls and boys from

Vernacular medium and English medium schools. A huge majority of both girls and boys from the English medium schools feel that girls should have the opportunity to study what they want, have careers of their choice and enjoy their spare time. However, when compared to English school students, 16% less Vernacular school

students, both girls and boys, feel that girls should have the opportunity to study what they want, 46% less feel girls should have careers of their choice and 52% less feel that girls should enjoy their spare time.

Interestingly more boys than girls in Vernacular medium schools hold that equal opportunities should be given to girls to have a career of their choice and enjoy their leisure time. It is probable that these girls are brought up to see the home as their primary responsibility, and they seem to have imbibed the notion that they

Table 2.3 presents the age analysis data. The age analysis revealed very similar trends in perceptions.

Table 2.3 Percentage agreeing that boys and girls should have equal chance to:

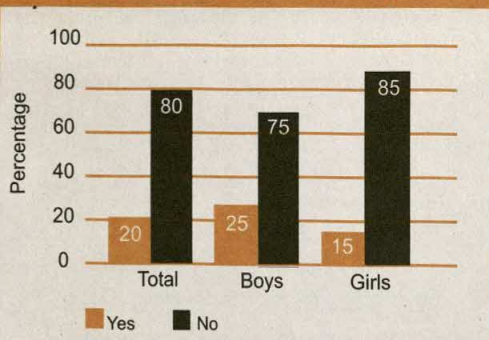
	Boys			Girls		
	12-13 Yrs	14-16 Yrs	17-19 Yrs	12-13 Yrs	14-16 Yrs	17-19 Yrs
Study what they want to	81	89	84	85	84	90
Have a career of their choice	70	76	74	66	70	65
Enjoy their spare time	61	67	62	58	57	59



Question 2

The second question asked whether boys and girls should be treated differently while growing up. Figure 2.4 presents a graphic representation of the same.

Figure 2.4 Should girls and boys be treated differently while growing up?



The above figure shows that while a majority of students (80%) felt that there should be no difference in treatment, 20% of the all students, (25% boys and 15% girls) are of the opinion that girls should not be treated at par with boys while they are growing up. Thus 10% more boys feel that girls should not be treated at par with boys.

Table 2.5 presents the findings of the age analysis.

Table 2.5 Proportion agreeing that girls and boys be treated differently:

	Boys	Girls	Ver	Eng
12-13 Years	26	20	28	19
14-16 Years	25	15	27	14
17-19 Years	23	12	22	14

The findings of Table 2.4 were corroborated by the age analysis that held that over 23% of boys across all age groups felt that different treatment should be meted out to the two sexes while growing

If I need something from the nearby shop in the evening my father never lets me go. Perhaps he wouldn't prevent me if I happened to be a boy.

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular school.

up, whereas fewer girls in each age group felt the same way. Age analysis also revealed that each older age group is less likely to agree that boys and girls should be treated differently while growing up, i.e. with increase in age, acceptability of differential treatment decreases. However, while there is only a 3% difference in opinion between the youngest and oldest age groups among the boys, this difference is more among girls at 8%.

The implications of the above analysis are that the process of maturation during the adolescent years has a limited impact on the opinion formation of boys. While the opinion formed at age 12 is likely to change upon maturity, this change is marginal for boys. On the other hand, for girls, the adolescent years have a far greater impact. So there is a significant difference in opinion between a 12-year old girl and 17 years old girl with regard to differential treatment. Apart from the maturity factor, it is probable that her personal experience of discrimination over the years leads to a changed perspective.

A closer look at the data revealed that 25% students from Vernacular medium schools felt that girls should be treated differently while growing up as compared to 15% students from English medium schools.

Table 2.6 Proportion agreeing that girls and boys should not be treated differently:

Eng		Ver	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
81	91	69	80

When analysed by sex in different medium schools, an interesting picture emerges. This is presented in the Table 2.6 above. 10% more boys from English medium schools advocate differential treatment as compared to girls from English medium schools, and 11% more boys from Vernacular medium schools advocate differential treatment as compared to girls from Vernacular medium schools.

However, while girls from Vernacular medium schools and boys from English medium schools think alike, there is a huge gap of 23% in thinking between girls from English medium schools and boys from Vernacular medium schools. Vernacular medium schoolboys advocate differential treatment the most (30%).

Interestingly, when compared by school environment, that is, co educational or single sex school, opinions were almost identical among young people. 20% of children attending single sex schools and 21% children attending co educational schools felt the need for differential treatment.

Chess competitions held in school are only for boys

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular co-educational school.

Question 3

The next two questions sought to investigate students' first hand experience of gender bias.

3A. First they were asked to answer whether they had personally ever been treated differently because of their sex. As Figure 2.7 reveals, there is a steady consistency across sub groups.

discriminatory behaviours were not identified as such by the students, as these were considered 'normal' or in the 'interest of women'. This was revealed during our group discussions. Hence the Vernacular medium girls may not have identified discriminatory behaviours and considered them as normal. However, Vernacular medium girls were more aware of differential

wanted or select the career of their choice and were encouraged to accept an early marriage.

■ **Behaviour-** Across the age groups it was seen that girls were encouraged to learn household work. Many resented this. Girls also reported many instances where they were required to do the housework while their brothers are not expected to help. One girl wrote that she was told that she must be "quiet, gentle and soft" as she was a girl.

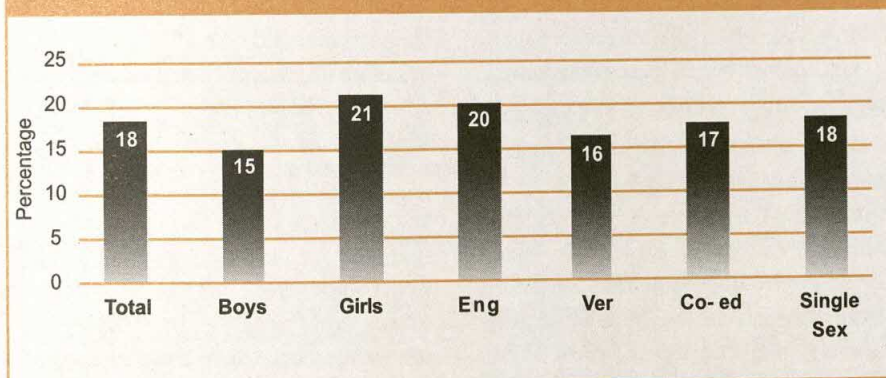
■ **Freedom of movement-** Many girls reported that they were not permitted to go out without a chaperon, use public transport, visit girl friend's home and had to be home at a very early hour. However, some justified their restricted movement to by citing the need for protection. Many said that this was for their own good.

■ **Dress code-** Some girls reported that they were not permitted to wear clothes of their choice and always had to dress "modestly" or wear clothes that were appropriate.

Some girls cited severe gender inequality in their home. Some said their parents did not approve of their studying. One girl wrote that when she was born the family was very disappointed at the birth of a girl child and due to the grief her grandfather expired. Since then her family hates her.

Of the boys who had cited facing differential treatment many acknowledged preferential treatment at home vis-à-vis sisters and cousins. They cited examples of how they were allowed late night outings, unrestricted use of the phone, free mixing with the opposite sex etc, while their sisters, even elder sisters were not given this freedom. However a number of boys also faced reverse gender biases and thus faced more severe punishments and academic pressure. Many resented reserved seats for women on public transport.

Fig 2.7 Percentage that has faced gender based differential treatment:



Approximately 18% of all students believe that they have been treated differently because of their sex. While 21% or approximately one in five girls had been treated differently because of her sex, for boys this figure was 15%. Thus 6% more girls felt that they have been treated differently. This implies greater awareness among girls of gender-based differences. It is important to note here that while girls reported negative discrimination due to their sex, boys referred to preferential treatment due to their sex.

When analysed by sex with respect to medium of instruction, we found that 25% girls from English medium schools felt they were treated differently as against 18% of girls from Vernacular medium schools. This finding is in contradiction to the earlier one where 10% more Vernacular medium girls felt that girls should be treated differently. This contradiction could be explained by the fact that a number of

treatment than Vernacular medium boys, just as English medium girls were more aware than English medium boys.

Age analysis reveals that the youngest age group is less aware of gender based differential treatment. For instance while only 13% of the 12-13 year old believe that they have been treated differently because of their sex, 23% of the oldest age group believe that they have been treated differently. Thus understanding about discrimination increases with age and first hand life experiences.

3B. This question also had a sub section that required respondents to illustrate with an example the different treatment they had experienced.

It was seen that the various illustrations given by the girls could be categorized into restrictions on

■ **Life choices-** Many girls reported that they were not permitted to study what they

Question 4

The next question sought to establish the level of acceptance of gender stereotypes at three levels – physical, emotional and intellectual. Table 2.8 summarizes the findings.

Table 2.8 Proportion agreeing that man by birth is:

	All	Boys	Girls
Physically stronger than women	70	78	60
More aggressive than women	50	57	42
More intelligent than women	26	41	10

Analysis revealed the acceptance of women as weaker than men in:

■ **Physical aspect:** Analyzed by sex it is seen that an overwhelming percentage of both boys and girls held that women are physically weaker than men. However, 18% more boys than girls perceive men as physically stronger. A large number of girls (two out of five) hold that women are physically weaker than men due to biological reasons.

■ **Aggression:** Almost half the sample group perceived men as more aggressive by birth. However 15% more boys than girls felt that men are more aggressive than women.

■ **Intelligence:** A very large percentage of boys perceived men as more intelligent 'by birth' than women. In contrast, a significant portion of young women - 90% - held that women are equal to men in mental capability.

A closer analysis of data further revealed that there was no difference in the acceptance levels among students from different school structures (that is, single sex or co educational school).

Table 2.9 Proportion in different language schools agreeing that man by birth is:

	All	Eng	Ver	Boys		Girls	
				Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
Physically stronger than women	70	72	67	83	73	58	62
More aggressive than women	50	54	46	62	51	44	41
More intelligent than women	26	21	32	32	50	7	13

However, some differences were seen among students from different medium schools as can be seen from Table 2.9.

We found that 72% of English medium school students as against 67% of Vernacular medium school students hold that men are physically stronger by birth. This difference is more marked for the second parameter where 54% of English medium school students as against 46% of Vernacular medium school students hold that men are more aggressive than women by birth. In both these cases students from English medium schools are seen as more accepting of the stereotypical image of women as the weaker sex.

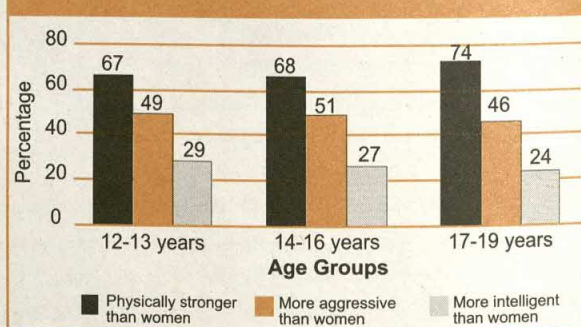
However, this same group is also more accepting of women as equal to men intellectually than students from Vernacular medium schools. Thus, while 21% of English medium school students hold that women are less intelligent than men a significant 11% more, that is, 32% of Vernacular medium school students feel the same way.

However, when analysed by sex of students in different medium schools, a different picture appears. English medium girls are least accepting of all students of the fact that men are physically stronger

than women and only 7% hold that men are more intelligent than women. There is a huge gap in perception between English medium girls and English medium boys.

An overall age wise analysis reveals that among all age groups the majority believes that men are physically stronger by birth. Older students are more likely to prescribe to this view than those from the youngest age group. Figure 2.10 presents the age analysis findings of the total sample.

Fig 2.10 Proportion agreeing that by birth men are:



Men and women are equal in every aspect other than physically.

17-19 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

Table 2.11 presents the age analysis data of boys and girls separately.

Analysis revealed that acceptance of women:

Table 2.11 Proportion agreeing that men are by birth:

	Boys all ages			Girls all ages		
	12-13 yrs	14-16 yrs	17-19 yrs	12-13 yrs	14-16 yrs	17-19 yrs
Physically stronger than women	80	77	79	54	59	67
More aggressive than women	57	59	53	40	43	41
More intelligent than women	48	41	34	8	10	11

Age analysis corroborates the sharp contrasts of opinion among the sexes but reveals great similarity of opinion among the different age groups of the sexes in most cases. However, with an increase in age, 14% less boys seemed to feel that women are less intelligent than men. In the case of girls, with an increase in age, more seem to feel that men are physically stronger than women. (See Appendix VI)

Question 5

The next question is designed to establish whether the socially sanctioned patriarchal view of women as homemakers and more emotional /dependent of the two sexes is accepted by the young. Table 2.12 presents the finding.

Table 2.12 Proportion agreeing that a woman by birth is:

	All	Boys	Girls	Ver	Eng	Boys		Girls	
						Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
A homemaker	27	36	16	20	34	38	34	29	5
More emotional and dependent than a man	54	63	43	54	54	62	64	43	43

Wide disparities in acceptance of women as homemakers and more emotional /dependent of the two sexes were evident between boys and girls.

perceive women as more emotional and dependent than men, 43% of girls feel the same way. While the percentage of girls who perceive themselves as more emotional

■ **As homemakers-** 36% of boys and 16% of girls prescribed to the gender stereotype that a woman's place in society is at home. Thus, more than twice the number of boys than girls felt that women are by birth homemakers.

An analysis of the girls' groups by medium of instruction shows that English medium girls students were 5 times more likely to believe that a woman is by birth a homemaker as compared to girl students from Vernacular schools. This could be due to the fact that in the Vernacular version of the questionnaire, the Bengali word used for 'homemaker' was 'grihabodhu', which could have been interpreted as 'housewife', which give a totally different connotation to the question. It would seem that a large number of Vernacular girls interpreted the question as 'Do you agree that a woman is a housewife by birth' – and answered in the negative.

■ **As more emotional and dependent than men-** While more than 60% of boys

and dependent than men is substantially less than boys, it is nevertheless a significant amount. In this case there is no difference in perception between Vernacular and English medium school students.

Question 6

The next question in this series has six subsections. It canvasses respondents' attitudes towards the socially accepted norms of women's behaviour that reflect gender bias. Six statements related to stereotypical images and roles of men and women were presented and the participants were asked to answer in yes or no. Table 2.13 is a tabular presentation of the finding.

Table 2.13 Proportion agreeing that:

	All	Boys	Girls
The man is the head of the family and has to be obeyed	56	70	41
A woman should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities	77	81	72
It is okay for a husband to stay at home and look after the family while the wife goes out for work	24	23	25
All important decisions of the family ought to be taken by the man of the house.	27	37	18
Motherhood is a woman's greatest achievement	75	81	67
Success in career is a man's greatest achievement	68	76	60

Analysis of the above responses revealed that out of the six socially acknowledged gender biases the majority of all students overwhelmingly (ranging from 56% to 75%) prescribed to gender biases on five counts. The only dissent was on decision making. An overwhelming 73% did not perceive decision making about family matters as the sole purview of the man.

Sex based analysis however reveals wide differences. On an average there is a 17% difference between the sexes, with boys more likely to prescribe to adverse gender biases.

■ **A man is the head of the family:** While 70% of boys perceived the man as the head of the family only 41% of girls felt the same way. Almost 80% of boys from Vernacular schools prescribed to this view, as compared to 61% of English medium school boys.

■ **Woman primarily a homemaker:** While more boys prescribed to the view that women should work only if it did not affect her household responsibilities, a huge 72% of women also agreed with this view. This could be partly attributed to the fact

■ **Motherhood as the greatest achievement of women:** While a majority of both girls and boys perceived motherhood as a woman's greatest achievement 14% more boys than girls felt so.

■ **Successful career as the greatest achievement of men:** While a majority of both girls and boys perceived a successful career as the greatest achievement of men, 16% more boys than girls felt this way.

When analysed by medium of instruction we do not find much variation in perspective in the last three parameters. However there is a vast difference in the first three parameters. This is seen from the Table 2.14 below.

Although it is nature's rule that women stay at home and look after the family, it is not right or ethical that men dominate them

17-19 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

analysed by sex and medium of instruction, 15% more girls from Vernacular medium schools, as compared to girls from English medium schools, feel that women should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities, thus placing emphasis on a woman as a homemaker. This is in contradiction to the earlier finding where girls from Vernacular medium

Table 2.14 Proportion agreeing that:

	Ver	Eng	Boys		Girls	
			Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
The man is the head of the family and has to be obeyed	64	49	61	80	33	48
A woman should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities	83	72	77	86	65	80
It is okay for a husband to stay at home and look after the family while the wife goes out for work	14	35	29	16	41	11
All important decisions of the family ought to be taken by the man of the house.	29	27	35	40	17	18
Motherhood is a woman's greatest achievement	76	73	78	85	69	67
Success in career is a man's greatest achievement	68	69	76	76	60	60

that only 16% of the students had both parents working outside the home – and therefore the woman's role as 'homemaker' was reinforced by their own mother's role in the family.

■ **Role of man as the bread winner:** 3 out of 4 girls and boys would not accept a man who stays at home while his wife works.

■ **Decision making as a male prerogative:** 37% boys felt that the man is the sole family decision-maker but only 18% of girls agreed.

■ **A man is the head of the family:** 15% more students from Vernacular medium schools perceived the man as the head of the family as compared to students of English medium schools. However, the difference in perceptions between Vernacular medium boys and girls was 32% and English medium boys and girls is 28%, with boys prescribing more to stereotypical views.

■ **Woman primarily as a homemaker:** 11% more students from Vernacular medium schools prescribe to the view that women are primarily homemakers. When

schools said that women are not born homemakers. We also find that the difference in perceptions between Vernacular medium boys and girls is 21% and English medium boys and girls is 12%, with boys prescribing more to stereotypical views.



■ Role of man as the bread winner:

English medium school students were two and a half times more accepting of a man who stays at home and looks after the family than Vernacular medium school students. When analysed by sex and medium of instruction we found that an overwhelming 90% of Vernacular medium girls were unable to accept a man who is not a breadwinner. Comparatively, approximately 40% English medium girls were open to accepting a man who is not a bread winner. Similarly, only 16% of Vernacular medium boys see themselves staying at home and looking after the family whereas almost twice as many English medium boys were prepared to take on this role.

Table 2.15 presents the age analysis.

Table 2.15 Proportion agreeing that:

	All		
	12-13 yrs	14-16 yrs	17-19 yrs
The man is the head of the family and has to be obeyed	63	55	55
A woman should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities	86	75	76
It is okay for a husband to stay at home and look after the family while the wife goes out for work	20	25	25
All important decisions of the family ought to be taken by the man of the house.	34	30	20
Motherhood is a woman's greatest achievement	82	71	78
Success in career is a man's greatest achievement	70	69	66

The youngest age group had the most conservative opinions and the only statement in which they revealed less bias was with regard to the statement related to househusbands and working wives.

Further the two older groups had very similar beliefs. On four counts related to a man's stronger position at home, woman primarily as a homemaker, role of man as the bread winner, and successful career as the greatest achievement of men the two older group hold nearly identical views. On decision making as a male prerogative and motherhood as the greatest achievement of women there is a difference between the two, where with age, the acceptance of socially accepted norms tends to decrease in the former instance and increase in the latter.

Question 7

The next question in this section sought to verify whether under equal circumstances, that is if both husband and wife were working, men and women should take equal responsibility of

chores must be shared when both partners are working, whereas only 65% of all Vernacular medium school students felt this way.

■ Equal sharing of household expenses:

A significant 84% of all students agreed to share expenses. When taking into account medium of instruction, 74% Vernacular medium school students agreed that expenses should be shared equally as compared to 94% of all English medium school students. 91% boys in English medium schools agreed to share household expenses while only 75% of boys in Vernacular medium would share expenses. Thus, boys from the Vernacular medium are more open to sharing household expenses than share in the housework. The implication of this is that boys are more agreeable to accepting their wife's monetary contribution to the running of the house

Table 2.16 Percentage agreeing to share:

	Total	Boys	Girls	Total		Boys		Girls	
				Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
Housework	80	78	83	96	65	93	62	99	69
Expenses	84	83	85	94	74	91	75	97	74

household chores and expenses despite the traditional role of women in the private sphere. This is reflected in the Table 2.16 above.

Analysis revealed that with regard to:

■ Equal sharing of housework:

While 80% of the all students agreed on the principle of equal sharing of housework, 5% less boys agreed to share household

work to the 83% of girls. However, when these figures are broken down according to medium of instruction it was seen that an overwhelming 96% of all English medium school students agreed that household

Whenever guests come home the boys sit and talk to each other while we have to do all the work like washing the utensils, keeping them in place and other work in the kitchen.

14-16 year old girl from a Vernacular school

than in doing their share of housework. Similarly, 5% girls from Vernacular medium schools feel that they should contribute towards expenses but have no expectations from men as far as sharing of housework is concerned.

The woman is being stupid by increasing her work by being independent. She could stay at home and do the housework. Instead she has to do her office work as well as housework.

14-16 year old boy from a single sex English medium school



KEY FINDINGS



★ Overwhelming percentages of students in English medium schools believe that both girls and boys should have equal opportunities to study, have a career and enjoy their spare time.

★ Majority of students from Vernacular medium schools agree that boys and girls should have equal opportunity to study, but only 50% feel that women should have a career of their choice and even fewer feel that women should have equal opportunity to enjoy their spare time.

★ Majority of students (80%) feel that there should be no difference in treatment between girls and boys.

★ Only 18% of all schoolchildren believe that they have been treated differently because of their sex. One in five girls has faced negative gender based differential treatment.

★ More girls have reported experiencing adverse gender based differential treatment. For girls the negative treatment would include restriction with regard to life choices, behaviour, freedom of movement etc, while boys reported preferential treatment in most cases.

★ Both young men and women accept many of the stereotypical images of women and men.

★ Students from English medium schools prescribe more to the stereotypes of men being more aggressive and stronger than women, however, more students from Vernacular schools prescribe to the view that men are intellectually superior to women.

★ More boys believe that women are not equal to them and that they are more intelligent than women. Girls strongly disagree with this view.

★ More students from English medium schools felt that men and women should share housework and household expenses, and were more accepting of a woman going out to work and a man staying home to look after the family, as compared to students from Vernacular medium schools.

★ There is a wide difference in perception between girls and boys regarding gender roles.

★ Girls are less likely to prescribe to gender stereotypes.

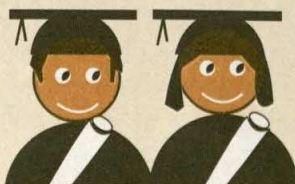
★ Younger age groups are more likely to prescribe to gender stereotypes.

★ The youngest age group is less aware of gender based differential treatment.

★ Age analysis corroborates the sharp contrasts among the sexes and but reveals great similarity of opinion among the different age groups of the sexes.

★ The two older groups are more similar in their views than the youngest age group.

★ As girls move from the early teens to adulthood, their perceptions change more than that of boys.



Section 2: Children's attitudes to and experience of violence against women and domestic violence in particular

Gender based violence is widely acknowledged to be the manifestation or the expression of gender inequality. Gender based violence is perpetuated by the 'stronger' on the 'weaker'. Acceptance of violence is an endorsement of unequal gender relations. In this section we have restricted ourselves due to a number of factors (paucity of space and constraints of resources and our interest and expertise in this field) to only one form of gender based violence-domestic violence.

Question 1

The first question in this section asked respondents whether it is okay to hit a woman under certain circumstances. Four conditions and two roles that women play in the lives of men were presented in this question. The conditions have been chosen as they present a threshold beyond which violent behaviour is viewed as acceptable. Table 2.17 presents the findings.

On an average approximately 36% of students agreed that physically assaulting a woman was acceptable under certain conditions. While not listening to a man

was regarded as a comparatively minor "offence", honesty, loyalty and respect were highly valued virtues, the violation of which was most likely to result in a physical beating. 50% of all respondents thought it was acceptable to hit a woman for her lack of honesty and loyalty. Twice the number of students thought it was permissible to hit a sister than hit a wife.

An analysis on the basis of sex revealed that the perception of boys and girls follow similar acceptance levels for all thresholds, except where 8% more boys than girls think it is okay for a man to hit his wife.

acceptance level of violence among boys from Vernacular and English medium schools. 1 out of 2 boys from Vernacular medium schools were likely to hit a woman if she was nagging or arguing compared to 1 in 3 boys from English medium schools. In all other circumstances too, a boy from a Vernacular medium school is more likely to use violence against a woman.

Interestingly, in all instances, boys from English medium schools were less accepting of violence against a woman than girls from Vernacular medium schools. Further, girls from Vernacular medium schools were four

Table 2.18 Proportion agreeing that it is okay for a man to hit a woman if:

	Eng	Ver	Boys		Girls	
			Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
She is nagging or arguing continuously	31	51	29	54	33	47
She is not loyal and honest to him	49	52	48	54	51	49
She does not listen to him	28	40	26	44	30	36
She is his wife	7	22	10	27	4	16
She is his sister	29	35	25	39	34	32
She does not respect him	38	46	37	49	38	42

Table 2.18 presents the data related to English and Vernacular medium school students.

It is seen that more children from Vernacular schools think it is okay for a man to hit a woman. In almost all cases boys and girls from Vernacular medium schools were more open to accepting physical violence towards the woman, especially towards the sister.

A closer analysis reveals significant variation in the

times more accepting of a woman being beaten if she was a wife than girls in English medium schools.

Men often want to show their importance by hitting women.

17-19 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

Table 2.17 Proportion agreeing that it is okay for a man to hit a woman if:

	All	Boys	Girls
She is nagging or arguing continuously	41	41	40
She is not loyal and honest to him	50	51	50
She does not listen to him	34	35	33
She is his wife	15	18	10
She is his sister	32	32	32
She does not respect him	42	43	40

Age analysis revealed that the youngest age group is most tolerant of violence. Significant percentages (54-37%) identified circumstances in which it is justifiable to hit a woman. Acceptance of violence significantly declines in the older age groups. The highest percentages (approximately 50%) of the youngest and oldest age groups perceived breach of loyalty and honesty as a justifiable reason to hit a woman. Among the 14-16 years group disobedience and disrespect from the woman was rated highest.

Many students scribbled on the questionnaire that they hit their sisters to discipline them or when they do something naughty. Some students also clarified that they would not resort to hitting a girl after she reached a "certain age".

The next question in this series was divided into two parts- one to be answered by girls and the other by boys.

Section for girls

Question 2A

Girls were asked a hypothetical question regarding their response if their husband physically assaulted them. The response choices were

- Forgive him
- Hit him back
- Call the police
- Forget about it
- Leave him.

The students were asked to tick only one option. However, we found that many students had ticked more than one. Interestingly, young women were not satisfied with the response choices given.

They commented on the questionnaire that they would take recourse to different responses at different stages of a physically abusive relationship. For instance, they would resort to dialogue and clear the misunderstanding the first time they were assaulted and would forgive their husband if he apologized.

Table 2.19 Response of girls if their husband hits them:

	Total	Ver	Eng
Forgive him	32	40	23
Hit him back	27	20	34
Call the police	13	14	13
Forget about it	12	12	12
Leave him	21	22	19

Table 2.19 represents their responses.

The three most popular choices were to forgive, hit or leave him. The majority (32%) would forgive him, 27% would hit him back and 21% would leave him. A mere 13% would report it to the police.

Analysis across medium of instruction reveals many similarities as well as differences. While girls from both mediums have very similar responses for the options of calling police, forgetting about it and leaving him, there are marked differences for the other two options. Thus, while 40% of Vernacular medium girls would forgive their spouse, only 23% of English medium girls would do the same. Similarly, while 20% of Vernacular medium girls would hit him back, 14% more girls (34%) from the English medium schools would do the same. Girls from English medium schools are thus more likely to hit him back. Approximately 2 out of 5 would respond by hitting back. While girls from both types of schools are accepting of violence it appears that girls from English medium schools are less so than their Vernacular medium counterparts.

The only sub group whose responses were slightly different was the group of girls from coeducational schools. While they were more likely to call the police (26%) no definite inference could be drawn, as they were also more open to forgiving (42%)

and forgetting about it (29%) and much less inclined to leave him (Table 2.20).

Table 2.20 If your husband hits you, will you:

	Co-ed	Single Sex
Forgive him	42	30
Hit him back	26	27
Call the police	20	13
Forget about it	29	9
Leave him	12	23

Domestic violence is an act of pure crime and must be checked as soon as possible. I know of a young lady who unknowingly became the second wife of a man. She has become completely insane after being brutally beaten up by her husband many times.

17-19 year old girl from a single sex English medium school

Section for Boys



Question 2B

Boys were asked the hypothetical question whether they would physically hit their wives under certain conditions. These conditions represent dereliction of perceived 'wifely' duties and 'deviant' behaviour patterns. Table 2.21 reveals that across the

Age analysis: Older age groups are less likely to hit a woman than the younger age groups. For instance, 1 in 2 boys from the youngest age group will hit their wives if she neglects her duty to her children compared to 3 out of 10, 14-16 year olds and 2 out of 10, 17-19 year olds. Thus, apparently with maturity boys are less accepting of violence against women.

Table 2.21 Proportion that will hit their wife if:

	All	Eng	Ver	Coed	Single Sex
She does not look after the household properly	9	8	10	13	8
She neglects her duty towards the children	34	31	37	43	28
She says something insulting to you	32	29	35	39	39
She lies to you	27	27	28	37	25
She hits you	50	57	43	60	48

board the pattern is similar with a few differences.

On an average, 3 out of 10 boys from English and Vernacular medium schools are likely to hit their wives under certain circumstances. Boys are more likely to resort to violence if they are hit and least likely to resort to violence if the house is neglected.

English medium schoolboys from 17-19 years are least likely to hit their wives. 12-13 years Vernacular medium schoolboys are most likely to respond with violence. Interestingly the 14-16 year olds from both mediums of instruction show remarkable similarities. However, more boys from English medium schools would hit their wives if she hit them, than boys from Vernacular medium schools.

Surprisingly, it is seen that boys from co-educational schools seemed more likely to resort to using violence under all conditions.

Question 3

Respondents were asked to answer in the positive or negative whether they thought it is ever acceptable to hit a woman. Figure 2.22 presents the finding.

On an average 17% of all students thought it acceptable to hit a woman. 25% of the Vernacular sub group, both girls and

boys accepted violence towards a woman as compared to 10% of the English sub-group. While 25% of boys from Vernacular schools thought that it was okay to hit a woman, a significantly lower 13% boys from English medium schools felt the same way. Girls from English medium schools were five times less likely to accept violence as compared to girls from Vernacular medium schools. This corroborates the earlier findings that girls from English medium schools are least accepting of violence.

Age analysis revealed no significant difference in acceptance of violence across age groups. 15-18% thought it was okay to hit a woman.

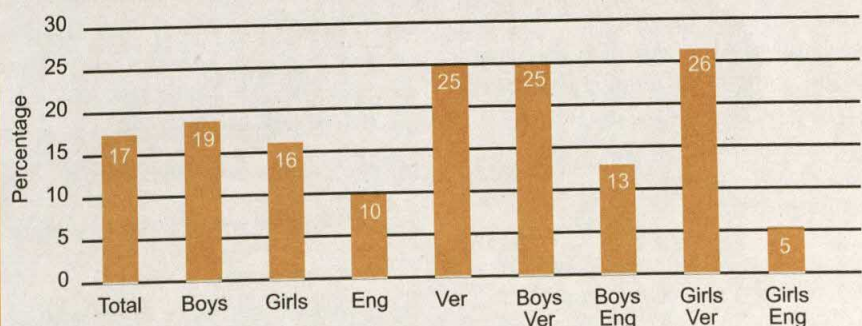


Women who can't keep secrets, who insult their husbands, lead an extravagant and lavish life when their husbands' income is less, should be beaten up. Women of loose character should be beaten up.

14-16 year old boy from a single sex English medium school



Fig 2.22 Percentage agreeing that it is acceptable to hit a woman:



Question 4

In an attempt to establish young people's understanding of domestic violence, students were presented with varied forms of domestic violence and asked to identify what constitutes domestic violence. The choices reflected the physical and verbal dimension of domestic violence (the most direct forms), denial of health facilities and curtailment of movement, life choices and economic abuse. Table 2.23 presents the findings.

verbal abuse as domestic violence. Significantly, 20% more students from Vernacular medium schools showed understanding about the fact that verbal abuse is a form of domestic violence.

■ **Not giving her enough to eat:** Significant percentages recognized that denying a woman food is a form of domestic violence. However, 6% more Vernacular medium school students recognised this as a form of abuse.

■ **Not taking her to the doctor when she is ill:** 73% of the students recognized this as a form of domestic violence. Girls have a slightly better understanding of domestic violence. 76% of the girls as compared to 70% of the boys perceived medical neglect as a form of violence. More Vernacular medium school students identified medical neglect as a form of domestic violence.

■ **Not letting her visit her father's house:** Majority of the students perceive this act as a form of domestic violence. Notably, 10% less boys than girls perceived restricted freedom of

movement as violence. There was no significant difference in perception between English-medium and Vernacular schools.

■ **Giving her no access to money:** Approximately 4 out of 10 students do not consider denying access to money as a form of domestic violence. There is no significant difference among girls and boys. The significant difference in understanding is among the students from Vernacular and English medium schools. 12% more students from English medium schools perceived the money factor as a form of domestic violence.

■ **Not letting her go out to work even if she wants to:** 3 out of 5 boys as compared to 3 out of 4 girls recognized this as a form of domestic violence. There is a wide difference in understanding between girls and boys as well as between students from English medium and Vernacular medium schools. 7% more students from English medium schools perceived denying a woman the opportunity to work as a form of domestic violence.

Table 2.24 presents the age analysis data. The age analysis reveals that young people develop awareness of the issue with age. Younger age groups of both the sexes are less aware of the varied forms of domestic violence.

Table 2.23 Percentage agreeing that domestic violence against women includes:

Q: Do you agree that domestic violence against women means:	All	Boys	Girls	Eng	Ver
Hitting/pushing/kicking	71	66	78	72	71
Calling her names	55	54	57	45	66
Not giving her enough to eat	69	67	71	66	72
Not taking her to the doctor when ill	73	70	76	70	76
Not letting her visit her 'father's house'	68	62	75	68	68
Giving her no access to money	61	57	65	67	55
Not letting her go out to work even if she wants to	67	59	75	70	63

Analysis of the data revealed that on an average 65% of students were able to identify the forms domestic violence takes and that girls were more aware of the varied forms of domestic violence. Domestic Violence was also understood by most as violence women faced within the home by members of their family.

■ **Hitting/pushing and kicking:** 3 out of 10 students do not perceive physical abuse as domestic violence. More girls than boys correctly identified the physical dimension of domestic violence. Despite different mediums of instruction there was no difference in perception.

■ **Calling her names:** Verbal abuse is not widely perceived as domestic violence. Approximately 1 in 2 young people from English medium schools did not perceive

Table 2.24 Percentage agreeing that domestic violence against women means:

	All		
	12-13 yrs	14-16 yrs	17-19 yrs
Hitting/pushing/kicking	64	70	79
Calling her names	48	54	72
Not giving her enough to eat	60	69	75
Not taking her to the doctor when ill	62	45	80
Not letting her visit her 'father's house'	58	67	75
Giving her no access to money	51	62	67
Not letting her go out to work even if she wants to	61	68	70

Question 5

The next question attempted to investigate the understanding young people have of the underlying motive of the perpetrators of physical violence and their attitude towards the “issue” of domestic violence. It asked them to identify the reason men beat women. The options ranged from choices that represented justification for a man’s action such as

less. For instance, 76% girls as against 64% boys feel that men beat women in order to control them. Thus a wide disparity of 12% is seen. Similarly, while 42% girls feel that women provoke a beating, this figure is 60% for boys.

The difference between students from English and Vernacular medium is more distinct than the difference between girls and boys. For instance, 92% of English

medium school students as against 65% of Vernacular medium school students hold that men beat women due to alcohol. Thus a difference of 27% is seen. This huge disparity between the two types of schools is also seen for the options of ‘they were abused as children’, ‘want to control

‘women provoke them’ or because ‘they love them’ to a more sophisticated understanding such as ‘they want to control them’. Table 2.25 presents the findings.

Analysis revealed that most students felt alcohol was a major cause of violence against women. In fact, 3 out of every 4 students blamed alcohol for being a reason for men beating women. There is an understanding among the young, with regard to control as an underlying motive for violence against women. However, 1 in 2 students hold women responsible for the violence.

Analysed by sex, very similar percentages of both sexes feel that men beat women because of alcohol and because they were abused as children. However, marked differences are seen for the options of ‘they love them’, ‘want to control them’ and ‘women provoke them’. It is seen that while significant percentages of girls feel the same way as boys the percentages are

them’ and ‘women provoke them’. The numbers range between 22% to 48%. 25% more students of schoolchildren from English medium schools recognize that men beat women to control them. Yet at the same time 22% more of this group hold women responsible for the abuse as compared to Vernacular medium schools.

Thus the data for the English medium school reveals that many schoolchildren have a confused understanding. On the one hand, 82% of this group shows remarkable understanding of the fact that men beat women in order to control them, while on the other 63% of the same group blames women for the violence. However, when we further segregate the data on the basis of sex, we find that 16% more English medium boys hold women responsible for violence as compared to English medium girls.

We find that Vernacular medium school boys and English medium school girls are

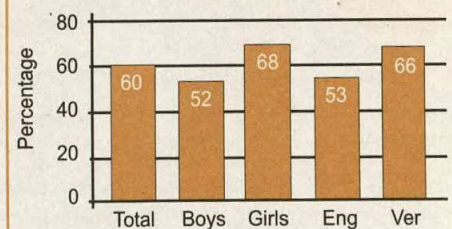
twice as likely to believe that men beat women because they love them, than Vernacular medium girls. 1 in 2 Vernacular medium school boys believe that women are responsible for the violence as compared to 1 in 3 Vernacular medium girls. 18% more Vernacular medium girls recognise the fact that men beat women in order to control them as compared to Vernacular medium boys.

An age analysis reveals that older age groups generally have a better understanding of the underlying causes of domestic violence.

Question 6

The next question attempted to discern whether students perceived of domestic violence as a public or private issue. Fig. 2.26 is a graphic representation of the findings.

Fig 2.26 Proportion that perceive domestic violence as a public issue



On an average 3 out of 5 young people think that domestic violence should be discussed openly.

Difference in opinion between boys and girls is seen with 16% more girls perceiving domestic violence as a public issue.

A difference of 13% is also seen among English (53%) and Vernacular medium school students (66%) implying that silence around domestic violence is more likely with English medium school students.

However, when broken up according to sex and medium of instruction, it is seen that boys from English medium schools perceive domestic violence as a public issue the least (Table 2.27). In contrast, more girls from English medium schools feel that domestic violence is a public issue as compared to boys from Vernacular medium schools. Significantly, Vernacular medium girls are most willing to break the silence around violence, with 3 out of 4 girls feeling that domestic violence is a public issue.

Table 2.27: Proportion that perceives domestic violence as a public issue

Boys		Girls	
Eng	Ver	Eng	Ver
48	57	60	76

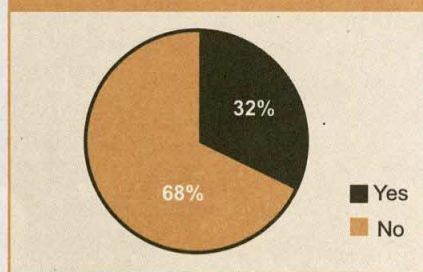
Age analyses revealed that it is the younger age group that is more open to a public debate on domestic violence as compared to the older two age groups. Older age groups are more likely to believe

that domestic violence is a private affair between a man and a woman.

Question 7

The final question in this line of questioning sought to establish the extent to which children had been exposed to domestic violence either directly or through second hand knowledge. Figure 2.28 presents this finding.

Fig 2.28 Has anyone you know faced domestic violence?



32% of the students, approximately 1 in 3 students, knew someone who had faced domestic violence. More girl respondents

(36% girls to 28% boys) knew someone or were able to identify someone who had faced domestic violence. Thus girls seemed to be more aware of domestic violence than boys were. 8% more Vernacular medium school students identified someone they knew who had faced domestic violence as compared to English medium school students. It is possible that English medium school students did not admit to knowing someone who had faced domestic violence as many felt that it was a private issue.

Age analysis revealed that higher percentages of the oldest age group were aware of domestic violence as nearly 2 out of 5, 17-19 year olds knew someone who had faced domestic violence.

Few students also narrated their personal experience. A boy student (in the age group 14-16 years) wrote: "My mother and myself have gone through a lot of hard times with my father. He hit my mother and abused me. But today we have left him for good..."

KEY FINDINGS

- ✦ The majority of students feel that violence against women is not acceptable, while about 36% feel that under certain conditions, violence by men can be condoned.
- ✦ The form of acceptance of violence among girls and boys is different. Boys openly accept violence as a tool for resolving conflict in an intimate relationship. Girls exhibit a tacit acceptance of violence by their admission that they are more likely to forgive an abusive husband.
- ✦ Only 13% of the girls would report an abusive husband to the police.
- ✦ 32% of both girls and boys agree that it is acceptable to hit a sister, but 18% and 10% respectively think that it is acceptable to hit a wife.
- ✦ Acceptance of violence declines significantly with age.
- ✦ There is widespread awareness of the varied forms of domestic violence although young girls were more aware.
- ✦ Despite the widespread awareness of the different forms of domestic violence this understanding is ambiguous. For instance, while only 45% of the students from English medium schools identified verbal abuse as a form of domestic violence this same group shows



remarkable understanding with nearly 70% recognizing that denying a woman access to money is also a form of domestic violence.

- ✦ Students from Vernacular medium schools are more open to accepting physical violence against a woman than students from English medium schools.
- ✦ It is significant that boys from English medium schools are less accepting of violence against a woman than girls of Vernacular schools. In fact, girls from Vernacular schools are 4 times more accepting of violence than girls from English medium schools.
- ✦ Young people have a confused understanding of the underlying motives of violence. However, understanding improves with age.
- ✦ 3 in 5 students think that domestic violence should not to be hidden behind closed doors.
- ✦ Girls are more open to discussing domestic violence in public than boys.
- ✦ The younger age groups are more open to a public discussion on domestic violence as compared to the older two groups.
- ✦ 1 in 3 students 'know' someone who has faced domestic violence.
- ✦ Older students are more aware of domestic violence.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS OF THE GROUP DISCUSSION

Section 1: Introduction

In addition to the questionnaire, 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were undertaken as a part of the study to explore young peoples attitude, understanding and acceptance of gender inequality and domestic violence. The approximate duration for each discussion was 1 hour. Participants were invited to discuss specific questions as well as individual statements from the questionnaire.

The average number of participants was 13 in each FGD. The age range of participants was from 12 to 19 years. Very few 12 year olds participated. The average age was approximately 15 years. 4 groups consisted of boys only, 4 consisted of girls only and two groups were mixed. Of these 5 were held in English and 5 in a Vernacular language either Hindi or Bengali. All involved individuals had participated in the questionnaire. In all, 132 students were involved, 65 boys and 67 girls. Most participants were known to each other in their respective groups (they ranged from casual acquaintances to close friends).

Group discussions revealed considerable consensus on certain points and disputes on others. Often despite significant differences with respect to acceptance of gender inequality, young people without exception converged in their belief that mental torture and psychological abuse was a more harmful form of domestic violence than physical assault.

We faced a lot of resistance and hesitation on a number of questions. This initial reluctance to openly contribute could be attributed to peer dynamics. It was overcome with a great deal of sensitive encouragement and prodding. However, there was tremendous confusion among the young people on many issues.

The discussions were divided into two sections:

- Attitudes to and experiences of gender inequality among school children.
- Attitudes to and experiences of violence against women and domestic violence in particular among school children.

However, not all questions were presented for discussion. Key questions were presented and the purpose was to identify their underlying belief systems on gender equality issues and gender based violence, as manifested in the private sphere of the home. In order to achieve this, many issues were discussed that were not initially on the agenda.

Section 2: Children's attitudes to and experience of inequality between men and women.

The group discussions reinforced many of the findings of the questionnaire. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that an overwhelming percentage believe that both girls and boys should have equal opportunities. However, the group discussions revealed that while the majority believe that girls should have equal access to opportunities, they recognize that in the real world access to equal opportunities is not there.

One boy justified unequal opportunities for boys and girls in studying what they want and choosing career:

Swayam: Is it okay that girls do not get equal opportunity as boys do?

P1 (Male 16 years): Yes

Swayam: Why?

P1: Girls have an easy way out...they get married...boys have more pressure...they have to get a job and work...

Group discussions revealed that acceptance of gender inequality is

widespread. Discussions with participants revealed that at some level a significant percentage hold that boys and girls are 'different'. According to them, this difference stems from human biology. Thus by birth women are perceived to be physically weaker, less aggressive and less intelligent than men. A woman's physical weakness is attributed to her childbearing ability. She is perceived to be 'tender' and thus deserving protection. A number of biological reasons such as the fewer red blood cells and less muscles that women have, were cited as reasons for a woman's physical weakness. A boy from an English medium school told us that his biology book told him that women were weaker. One student held that men eat more and therefore they are stronger and this capacity is a result of the great enzymes that men have.

P1 (Male 16 years): But the weaker part of society should respect...

P2 (Female 16 years): Why?

P1: Not respect but...look up to the upper part and the upper part should also be concerned and help.

Swayam: What is the upper part?

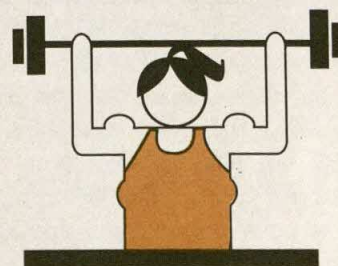
P2: Do you think that man is the upper part and women the lower part?

P1: No...but it is totally biological...we cannot falsify that.

Swayam: What is the evidence?

P1: My biology book has a chapter.

P2: No... No...



Participants were asked to explain the better performance and speed of women athletes in USA as compared to Indian male athletes. This resulted in great confusion among the boys. The initial response was silence followed by the justification that in USA food and training is better. Participants were then asked whether it was possible then that woman's physical weakness stems from poor nutrition and socialization. Most participants generally agreed then that it was the process of socialization that prevents women from developing their physical faculties.

Generally most participants agreed that men and women were of equal intelligence. However, some boy participants told us that men are smarter in 'worldly affairs' while women only have bookish knowledge.

P1 (Male 17 years): I don't think that men are stronger by birth.

P2 (Female 15 years): It's the way we are brought up.

P3 (Female 15 years): If men are stronger physically, women are mentally stronger.

This widespread acceptance of a woman as 'weak' and gender stereotypes was clearly reflected in our discussion. For instance, a number of participants believed that given that a woman bears a child it is natural that her first duty is towards her children. Thus, she should not go out to work if it affects her parenting capacity.

Most of the participants did not believe that they have been treated differently. In fact, the general feedback we got was that many younger participants were unaware that they had been treated differently. However, when they were asked more pointed questions such as: "who helps your mother around the house?" young girls identified themselves and young boys identified their sisters. When we further asked that would this constitute different treatment, some girls told us that while it

All kinds of domestic violence are not acceptable but there are some women who really deserve to be punished by their husbands if they do ill deeds. But that does not mean that the husband will go and hit her. Maybe he can boycott her in some other non-violent way.

14-16 year old girl from a co-ed English medium school

was different it was not wrong as girls 'have to learn to do house work' as one day they would get married and then do all the work in their in-laws' home. Some students agreed that housework should be shared but also stated that in reality boys hardly did any housework. Some girls held their parents responsible for differential treatment and said that their brother's education was given priority over theirs.

Generally young women from English medium schools were more aware of being treated differently. They cited numerous examples such as restricted freedom of movement, earlier curfew hours than their brothers, not permitted to have male friends as indication that they were treated differently.

Section 3: Children's attitudes to and experience of violence against women and domestic violence in particular

The various group discussions corroborated our questionnaire findings that young people are aware that violence against a woman is unacceptable but generally justify violence under certain conditions. These conditions reflected the common understanding of the so-called 'deviant behaviour' of a woman. Thus if a woman is perceived as disobedient, disrespectful or dishonest or is found to be

lying, then it is okay for a man to hit her. A large number of women also prescribe to this view.

Swayam: Do you agree that physical torture at home is domestic violence?

P1 (Female 15 years): Yes...and women are not the only sufferers...

Swayam: Suppose a wife does something wrong and her husband hits her. Would you consider this as domestic violence?

P1: No

P2 (Female 16 years): No

P3 (Female 17 years): No. That's not violence

Swayam: Why?

P3: It depends on the intention of the person who is hitting... he is asking her not to do wrong.

Swayam: So if there is a reason to hit it is ok?

P3: No...

P4 (Male 16 years): Why should a man be allowed to hit?

Swayam: Suppose she is disrespectful to him?

P5 (Male 17 years): Break up...

P4: Violence is not the solution.

P2: Break away...why continue?

My brother is allowed to go out on his own. I am not.

14-16 year old girl from an English medium school

In another group discussion:

Swayam: Is beating a woman a crime?

P1 (Male 16 years): Yes

P2 (Male 16 years): Not always...

P3 (Male 15 years): Depends on circumstances...

Swayam: Like?

P3: She is not behaving properly...even a woman can beat a woman...it is the intention.

Swayam: What is the intention?

P3: Betterment of the other...even a mother beats her child.

P1: No...a child does not have the same mental strength like a woman who is grown up...

P3: So if a full grown woman does something wrong and the other person makes her understand and she does not understand or want to understand then no one is there to stop her?

P1: Is the answer beating?

P3: It is the last resort.

The conversations reflected that using violence as a form of punishment was fine if a woman was in the wrong and the intention of the violence was for her 'betterment'. This was linked to the logic that parents beat their children when they are in the wrong.

Many young women and men recognized that victims accept violence, as they may not have a support mechanism to help them fight their situation. Young women said that if they were victims they were not likely to go to the police given that most are men and are unlikely to help or understand. There was clearly a lack of faith in the police system.

Participants had a good understanding of domestic violence. They clearly recognized that domestic violence is more than physical abuse. They recognized

mental torture as an equally important facet of domestic violence. Many participants held that mental torture was worse than physical violence as bodily scars heal but if a woman's self-confidence is broken she cannot recover. Some also identified denying nutrition and education, restrictions on movement and lack of independence for girls as domestic violence inflicted on them by their parents.

Swayam: What forms does domestic violence take?

P1 (Male 17 years): Torture on the fair sex by males...could be in any form...physical torture, snatching away her independence, restricting the woman...

P2 (Male 16 years): But I think that more than physical torture mental torture is more important because like...it breaks the confidence of the woman and leads to other problems...

P1: With physical torture there is obviously mental torture.

P2: But not always...mental torture is more hurting...I mean to say...that you can tolerate physical torture but mental torture is something that keeps on striking you at every moment.

Participants also recognized that domestic violence was not restricted to any social class or community. However, some were of the opinion that physical abuse was more prevalent in poorer classes and the pressure for women to 'adjust' was much more in the upper classes.

The participants revealed a very good understanding of the motives underlying abuse by a man. They were able to correctly identify many of the factors.

Swayam: Why do some husbands hit or abuse their wives?

P1 (Female 16 years): Man just wants to show that he is physically stronger...

P2 (Female 15 years): Man is simply taking advantage...

P3 (Male 16 years): They have a superiority complex.

P2: To keep women under control.

P1: Because he knows that his wife will not hit him as she is physically not capable of hitting him or has decided not to hit him.

P4 (Male 14 years): Because of society...man made society and get the advantages to himself...

P3: The issue is very complex.

On the issue whether domestic violence is a private affair opinions are confused. While children recognize that it is a crime and thus should be reported to the police most said that it would be the last resort. First the couple should try to sort out the problem through dialogue and only if it becomes very bad should the woman go to the police.

Very few participants were forthcoming when asked whether they knew anyone who had faced domestic violence. A great deal of encouragement was required. One 12-year-old boy from a Vernacular medium told us that in his village a married woman was burnt and her body was found in the fields. The whole village knew that her husband used to beat her after getting drunk. The police came and arrested him. Others narrated stories of women in their neighborhood who had "gone mad" or were hospitalized as the husband and mother in law used to physically and mentally torture her by not letting her go out, insulting her family and not giving her food to eat.

I think that domestic violence can only be stopped if all women become economically independent.

12-13 year old girl from a single sex English medium school

CHAPTER VI RECOMMENDATIONS


We have seen from the findings of this study that many young people of today subscribe to stereotypical roles and values for men and women, which result in gender inequality. Our findings show that more boys than girls subscribe to stereotypical roles and values. As a result, there is bound to be an increase in conflict when these young people enter into relationships, as their expectations from each other are very different.

Further, boys are open to using violence to resolve conflicts and girls are more likely to accept violence inflicted on them. Hence the cycle of violence is bound to continue and women will continue to face and accept violence in their lives. Yet violence helps neither the abuser nor the abused – the only solution is to break the stereotypes and encourage both men and women to live a free, natural, upright, caring and violence-free life.

Needless to say that interpersonal relationships – between two women or two men and between a woman and a man, form a major ingredient of our well being. Happiness and harmony at home provide us with a sense of security in our childhood and this stays on with us and influences our attitude towards life, the way we connect with others and our self-esteem. Equality, mutual respect, preferring negotiation to violence in resolution of conflicts, are values that enable us to form mutually supportive and understanding relationships. We get a better chance of sharing our responsibilities, worries and in the process lead a life that is less isolated, less monotonous, less vulnerable to stress and breakdown, more vibrant, open to change and warm.


The lessons in equality and interpersonal relationships are learnt early and indirectly. A child picks up cues from what she sees around her - in her family,

in the neighbourhood, in school, through depiction in storybooks, T.V serials, advertisements and films. In order that the perspectives of the youth change, it is important that these cues support gender equality and respect rather than endorse traditional values where women are subordinated and oppressed.



Some women do have faults but it should not be corrected by hitting, it should be solved by discussion and understanding. A husband or a man should understand enough to forgive her faults and not at all try to dominate by his powers.

17-19 year old girl from a single sex English medium school



The purpose of school and college education is to impart knowledge, sharpen analytic skills, motivate students to explore new horizons, question, review and move towards a healthier and meaningful life. Schools play a crucial role in a child's mental development. Wolfe et al (1995) suggest that 'processes associated with adolescent development and dating experiences suggest that this period of development may be crucial to the formation of healthy, non-violent relationships later in life'. Besides, "Adolescence represents a time of opportunity to disrupt destructive constructs of normative gender relations before they are set in adulthood. It therefore remains important to work with adolescents as well as younger children in preventing violence."⁸ Thus we feel that schools with their pool of resources could do a lot to make our future citizens more sensitive human beings and move them towards a healthier interpersonal life as well. We would therefore like to make a few recommendations on how schools can

help in ensuring that students learn to imbibe values of equality and non-violence so that we can look forward to a world where women are safe and free to exercise their human rights.

School Policy against Violence

Schools could adopt an unambiguous policy of 'There is no Excuse for Violence' in their daily work, from punishments to interpretation of texts. When students find violence being used in school as a form of punishment, they internalize the message that it is 'okay' to use violence to 'right a wrong'. Schools have to lead the way and show students non-violent ways of resolving conflicts.

School Policy against Stereotyping

It has been seen that schools often tend to provide course options that steer girls towards stereotypical humanities, social sciences and home sciences, and boys towards the pure sciences. Many girls are conditioned to believe that mathematics and technology are the domain of boys, and tend to think that they are unable to cope with such subjects. Schools should encourage more girls to opt for 'technical' courses and science streams, rather than the stereotypical options of humanities, creative arts and social sciences. Vocational activities for boys and girls should not be segregated into masculine domains such as 'carpentry' and 'auto mechanics' and feminine domains such as 'sewing' and 'cooking'. The same applies to extra-curricular activities, such as sports and competitions.

Teachers and parents should also be aware that there is a growing 'gender digital divide' amongst teenagers today, with more boys having access to computers, the Internet and videogames. Not only do computer games reinforce stereotypical values and behaviour, boys' games tend to be focused around sports and warfare, and play a large part in encouraging aggressiveness as a strategy for winning.

Orienting Teachers

Teachers are a major influencing factor in the lives of students. Teachers are very often the role models for young students who admire them and emulate them silently. The treatment meted out to them by their teachers bear loaded messages. In fact, the attitudes of their teachers as reflected in their behaviour, are unknowingly absorbed and internalized by their students. Therefore, it is important that teachers become aware of gender stereotypes that are ingrained in their thinking, so that they do not display any gender bias in their own interactions with young boys and girls. Often, discipline is ensured in a way that widens the gap between a boy and a girl. Casual comments like, 'boys are not supposed to cry – are you a girl?,' or 'I understand that your ultimate goal is to get married, like all girls, and that's why you are not interested in your studies' – reinforce the unequal status of women in society.

It is also essential for teachers to understand that gender equality is not an issue that concerns only women; but also men. It is usually believed that breaking the stereotypes will help women at the cost of men. However, nothing can be further from the truth. While women suffer because of the social pressure of being dependent and ever-servile; men suffer because of the pressure of being ever-aggressive and the sole bread-winners of the family. Men are forced to deny their sensitivity, compassion and empathy – qualities inherent in all human beings – or face ridicule. Breaking the stereotypes will result in fewer economic responsibilities and pressures for men, and allow them to express themselves freely without fear of ridicule.

It is therefore necessary to inculcate positive attitudes and encourage affirmative action in boys. Boys need to understand to the fact that 'being emotional' and 'weak'

are not necessarily the same as being 'sensitive to another's emotions'. Learning that 'boys can also cry, and girls also need to be strong' brings a new dimension into how boys and girls view themselves. Teaching boys to constructively express their emotions will also lead them towards a fuller, richer personal life, and will open their minds to active, whole-hearted participation in care-giving and child-rearing activities within the home.

Both boys and girls should be made aware of the fact that work within the four walls of the home is as valuable as the economic activity that is conducted in a place of business, and that the contributions of the care-giver in the family, whether male or female, is no less valuable than that of the person working in the public sphere.

Moreover teachers can motivate the students to promote gender equality and fight gender-based violence. Support from teachers has helped students in fighting for their rights at home. We have come across various cases where a timely intervention from the teacher has stopped the marriage of a girl who was underage, convinced parents of the need for a girl to study and stopped abuse that a girl was facing.

Thus ensuring that teachers are aware of and understand gender issues is essential, as they play crucial role in ensuring equality for their students. Schools should organise trainings for teachers on this issue to better equip them to work with the students.

Integrating gender perspective in school texts

School texts offer perspectives or reinforce norms that shape the way in which a child's sense of ethics develops. Hence it is important to ensure that textbooks do not reinforce gender stereotypes that result in gender inequality.

Literature

It is important to introduce students to women authors as well as select such prose pieces that do not reinforce social stereotypes regarding roles of men and women. Projection of women either as 'witches' or as 'damsels in distress', tend to undermine their strength and wisdom. The image of a woman as a person incapable of looking after herself, submissive, weak and unintelligent is reinforced. Moreover depiction of powerful women as 'witches' indirectly breeds contempt towards women who are assertive, strong and powerful. Care has to be taken to select and write new scripts that would present healthier and respectable images of women and men. Literature that portrays men as sensitive and caring, should also be selected. This will help break stereotypical images of men as strong and aggressive and provide boys and girls role models that do not limit the roles that they can play in society.

Social Sciences

History and Geography are stories about people of different ages and different regions. The contribution of men and women for the progress of civilization, culture and economy has to be separately written and explained. In higher classes, the origin of patriarchy, inter-relation between property issues and condition of women and history of women's movement should also be taught.

Women should never suffer domestic violence. We should never go against a woman's right. We should remember that our mother's are also women.

14-16 year old boy from a single sex English medium school

● Physical science/ Life Science/ Mathematics –

Discoveries and inventions by women scientists, how various technological innovations have influenced the life of men and women respectively should be included.

It is very important for children to be aware of the realities regarding the biological make up of the two sexes. Myths about the intrinsic strength of men and differential intelligence levels of the two sexes ought to be reviewed. Information about the sex ratio – what is natural vis-à-vis the reality; mortality rate – what is natural vis-à-vis the reality, ought to be shared.

Even in the field of mathematics sufficient gender sensitivity has to be shown while creating mathematical problems to be solved. In problem sums, the projection of women as those who take more time to complete a job that is done in lesser time by less number of men, or women necessarily taking more time in covering lesser distance than men etc, reinforce the 'weak and inefficient' image of women and definitely influence a child's attitude towards women and men.

Working with Parents

In the growing years, the home and school are the major influences in a child's life. If inequality is practiced in the home, the child is likely to hold similar values. If the child faces or witnesses violence in the home, chances are that he or she is more likely to be violent or accept violence in his or her own life. Hence it is important that parents also challenge their own views on gender inequality and violence.

Schools can play a significant role in sensitising parents to these issues by organising seminars, plays, debates etc around these issues for parents. Parents of children who confide in teachers or whom teachers identify as needing help with the problems they are facing at home, can be called and counselled. Teachers could utilise

parent-teachers meetings to make the caregivers more aware of child rights, merits of impartial upbringing of boys and girls and the ill effects of gender discrimination on children.

Awareness for Students

If we want to change perceptions of school children, so that they shed stereotypical notions of gendered roles and learn non-violent ways to deal with conflict, we have to help them look into themselves to see where their own biases and views towards gender inequality and violence against women and girls lie.

In order to do this, it is important for schools to organise group discussions on gender inequality and violence against women and the girl child. Workshops can also be organized to sensitize children on the issue with the help of organizations working in this field. Representatives from women's groups or university women's studies centres, experienced in gender issues can be invited to speak to the students. Students could make classroom presentations, presentations in Assembly, or meet in small groups at break/after school to discuss these.

Announcements can be prepared for morning assembly that relate to gender issues. The announcements could take the form of songs, quotes, and facts.

Films portraying women in strong roles, and sensitive men as role models can be shown to students.

A school contest on posters created by students on issues of gender equality and protesting discrimination against the girl child and violence against women can be held to actively involve the children. An exhibition of such posters in the school campus will spread the message to parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and students alike. Boys need to be actively encouraged to participate in activities condemning violence against women, rather than being passive subscribers of non-violence.

Similarly, essay writing competitions or skits could be conducted to generate interest and awareness among students on this issue. Interschool debates and quizzes, and panel discussions can also be organized.

A mural regarding the issues can be created for the school foyer. This could be created by a small group of students for the entire student population.

Students can be encouraged to form a club or movement where they meet with peers from other classes and schools and formulate actual plans to spread gender equal messages and counter unequal and discriminatory practices at home and in the community. They can be given the option of interacting with the community as part of their social work project and sensitize them on issues of gender equality, care for the girl child and violence against women.

They can also be encouraged to collect newspaper clippings about instances of violence against women and maintain a scrapbook for ready reference when mobilizing other students and reaching out to the community.

All these will go a long way in ensuring that students look into themselves, challenge their own biases and views and work towards more healthy, equal and non-violent relationships.



Appendix I

International Initiatives

In the 1990s violence against women has emerged as a focus of international attention and concern:

- ★1993: The UN General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN Resolution 48/104.
- ★1994: International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, women's organizations from around the world advocated ending gender violence as a high priority. The Cairo Programme of Action recognized that gender violence is an obstacle to women's reproductive and sexual health and rights, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action devoted an entire section to the issue of violence against women.
- ★1994: The Commission on Human Rights appointed the first Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and empowered her to investigate abuses of women's human rights.
- ★1994: The Organization of American States (OAS) negotiated the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women. As of 1998, 27 Latin American countries had ratified the convention.
- ★1996: The 49th World Health Assembly adopted a resolution (WHA49.25) declaring violence a public health priority.
- ★1998: The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) brought together 400 experts from 37 countries to discuss the causes and costs of domestic violence, and policies and programs to address it. The IDB currently funds research and demonstration projects on violence against women in six Latin American countries.
- ★1998: UNIFEM launched regional campaigns in Africa, Asia/Pacific, and Latin America designed to draw attention to the issue of violence against women globally.
- ★1999: The United Nations Population Fund declared violence against women "a public health priority".

Source: The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Center for Health and Gender Equity, CHANGE Population Reports
http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/11/111boxes.stm#framework

Appendix II

Koïchiro Matsuura the Director General of UNESCO says:

"Countless acts of violence afflicting women and children in both developed and developing countries still persist, ranging from domestic violence, battering, marital rape and dowry-related violence to pre-natal sex selection in favour of male babies, female infanticide, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation, including trafficking and forced prostitution. Moreover, in situations of armed conflict, women and girls are increasingly targeted for attack, mistreatment and, in some circumstances, systematic rape. As refugees, women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence while in flight, in refugee camps and/or during resettlement. Violence

against women and girls occurs in all countries, in all regions, and in every segment of society, though the forms and incidence of such violence are variable. Often, violence is not random - women and girls are victims simply because they are female. Thus, gender-based violence is an expression of gender inequality but it also may serve to bolster wider patterns of gender discrimination and injustice."

Source: UNESCO, "Message Director General", 8 March 2002
http://www.unesco.org/women/Message.htm

Appendix III

Lessons learnt in a violent home

"For children growing up in violent environments, the essential sequential lessons are:

- violence is used to gain control
- violence is accepted as a means of control
- violence is acceptable
- violence is an acceptable means of control

Research indicates that children who have experienced family violence are at a much higher risk of becoming perpetrators, and have a far greater acceptance of violence as a means of control. However, early experience with violence does not 'determine' later violence. Despite their higher risk, most children who have witnessed or are victims of violence in their families of origin do not go on to be perpetrators.

Factors protecting witnesses to, or victims of, violence from becoming perpetrators have been identified and include success at school and healthy relationships with siblings and friends. While the degree to which protective factors can be taught or their development facilitated remains somewhat contentious, prevention efforts are certainly required in early childhood."

Source: Working with Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence: Rural Town Model- Summary
http://www.ncp.gov.au/ncp/Publications/80395 DV summary/2 literature review.htm

Appendix IV

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER

SEX	GENDER
Sex is natural	Gender is socio-cultural and is man made
Sex is biological. It refers to visible differences in genitalia and related differences in procreative functions	Gender is socio-cultural and refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behaviour patterns, roles and responsibilities, etc.
Sex is constant. It remains the same everywhere	Gender is variable and changes from time to time, culture to culture, and even family to family
Sex cannot be changed	Gender can be changed

Source: Understanding Gender, Kamala Bhasin

Examples of sex differences - men have more hair on their faces than women, men are on average taller than women, men are more likely to go bald than women are.

Examples of gender differences - women wear skirts and men don't; women have long hair and men don't; "pink is for girls and blue is for boys". Sex differences vary little from culture to culture, race to race, over time; gender differences vary hugely (e.g. long hair may be feminine or masculine)."

Source: Professor Frances R. Woolley, Carleton University, Department of Economics, March 6, 1998 <http://www.carleton.ca/~fwoolley/342m-s98.htm>

Appendix V

A framework for understanding partner violence

"Increasingly, researchers are using an 'ecological framework' to understand the interplay of personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors that combine to cause abuse. In this model, violence against women results from the interaction of factors at different levels of the social environment. The model can best be visualized as four concentric circles. The innermost circle represents the biological and personal history that each individual brings to his or her behavior in relationships. The second circle represents the immediate context in which abuse takes place—frequently the family or other intimate or acquaintance relationship. The third circle represents the institutions and social structures, both formal and informal, in which relationships are embedded—neighborhood, workplace, social networks, and peers groups. The fourth, outermost circle is the economic and social environment, including cultural norms.

A wide range of studies agrees on several factors at each of these levels that increase the likelihood that a man will abuse his partner:

- At the individual level these include being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence in the home having an absent or rejecting father and frequent use of alcohol.
- At the level of the family and relationship, cross-cultural studies have cited male control of wealth and decision-making within the family and marital conflict as strong predictors of abuse.
- At the community level women's isolation and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men's violence, predict higher rates of violence.
- At the societal level studies around the world have found that violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honor, or dominance. Other cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means to settle interpersonal disputes, and the perception that men have "ownership" of women.

By combining individual-level risk factors with findings of cross-cultural studies, the ecological model contributes to understanding why some societies and some individuals are more violent than others and why women—especially wives—are so consistently the victims of abuse."

Source: The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Center for Health and Gender Equity, *CHANGE Population Reports* <http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/11/11/11boxes.stm#framework>

Appendix VI

As compared to the boy child...

An UNICEF newsletter reports that the *Voices of Youth's* Girl Child discussion board has received more than 2,000 messages from young people in 110 countries worldwide. "The discussions revealed that girls tended to compare themselves and their potential to that of boys, as opposed to declaring their own objectives and goals."

"Are we the same? Many young people stated that boys and girls had identical strengths and weaknesses, both intellectually and physically. Advocates of this viewpoint often cited girls' ability to excel in sports, and denounced the unequal burden of housework placed on the girl child as a prime example of gender discrimination.

Or are we different? Others felt that boys and girls were inherently different, and that the objective was not equality in all areas, but equal rights and acceptance. Still others recognized the need to view oneself in his/her own context, and not to consistently compare."

Source: UNICEF, 'The Girl Child and Gender Inequality' Newsletter of *Voices of Youth*, October 2002 www.unicef.org/voy

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Working with Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence: Rural Town Model- Summary [http://www.ncp.gov.au/ncp/Publications/80395 DV summary/2 literature review.htm](http://www.ncp.gov.au/ncp/Publications/80395%20DV%20summary/2%20literature%20review.htm)

QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a short questionnaire about young people's perspective on gender inequality. It will take approximately 10 minutes. Most of the questions require you to just tick the boxes. Approximately 3800 boys and girls from 20 schools in Kolkata are participating. It would really help our study if you participated. It is completely anonymous, so you can be totally honest.

1. How old are you?

☐ 12-13 Years ☐ 14-16 Years ☐ 17-19 Years

2. Are you?

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. In which school are you?

☐ English Medium ☐ Vernacular Medium ☐ Single Sex ☐ Co-educational

4. Do your parents work outside your house:

	Yes	No
Mother		
Father		

5. Should boys and girls have equal chance to:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Study what they want to			
Have a career of their choice			
Enjoy their spare time			

6. Should girls and boys be treated differently while growing up?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Have you ever been treated differently because of your sex?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7a. If 'Yes', please give us an example:

8. Do you agree that man is by birth:

	Yes	No
Physically stronger than women		
More aggressive than women		
More intelligent than women		

9. Do you agree that a woman by birth:

	Yes	No
Is a home-maker		
Is more emotional and dependent than a man		

10. Do you agree that:

	Yes	No
The man is the head of the family and has to be obeyed		
A woman should go out to work only if it does not affect her household responsibilities		
It is okay for a husband to stay at home and look after the family while the wife goes out for work		
Motherhood is a woman's greatest achievement		
Success in career is a man's greatest achievement		

11. When both the husband and the wife are working both of them should share:

	Yes	No
The expenses of household.		
The burden of housework		

12. Do you think it is okay for a man to hit a woman if:

	Yes	No
She is nagging or arguing continuously		
She is not loyal and honest to him		
She does not listen to him		
She is his wife		
She is his sister		
She does not respect him		

13. Do you think that men beat up women because:

	Yes	No
They love them		
Of alcohol		
They themselves were abused as children		
They want to control women		
Women provoke them		

Instruction: Girls please answer Q.14a Boys please answer Q. 14b

14a. If your husband hits you, will you: Please Tick one of the options

☐ Forgive him ☐ Hit him back ☐ Call the police ☐ Forget about it ☐ Leave him

14b. Will you hit your wife if: Please tick as many of the options as applicable

☐ She does not look after the household properly ☐ She neglects her duty towards the children
☐ She says something insulting to you ☐ She lies to you ☐ She hits you

15. Do you agree that domestic violence against women means –

	Yes	No
Hitting/pushing/kicking		
Calling her names		
Not giving her enough to eat		
Not taking her to the doctor when ill		
Not letting her visit her 'father's house'		
Giving her no access to money		
Not letting her go out to work even if she wants to		

16. Has anyone you know faced domestic violence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Do you think that domestic violence is a private affair between a man and woman; therefore it should not be discussed in public?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Do you think that it is ever okay to hit a woman?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please use this space to say anything you want to about the issues in this survey.

THANK YOU.

Swayam is a women's rights organization committed to ending violence against women and children, based in Kolkata, India.

Swayam literally means 'oneself' and was set up to provide a holistic support service to women facing violence in their lives. We believe that each individual possesses an inner strength to counter obstacles and thus emerge with renewed self-confidence as a stronger, more complete person. Our strength is our empowering, woman-centred approach, which looks beyond a woman's immediate need for support and encourages her to become self-confident, self-sufficient and self-reliant. Our Support Centre provides wide-ranging services like counselling, a drop-in-centre, follow up of cases with the police, legal aid, health care, child support and referrals for employment, vocational training and shelter.

Through our co-ordinated programme of research and awareness-raising, we work to challenge the societal norms and values that perpetuate violence against women and to influence public policy decisions that affect women's rights. We believe in the power of collective organisation and much of our work is done in collaboration with other organisations and networks.

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